

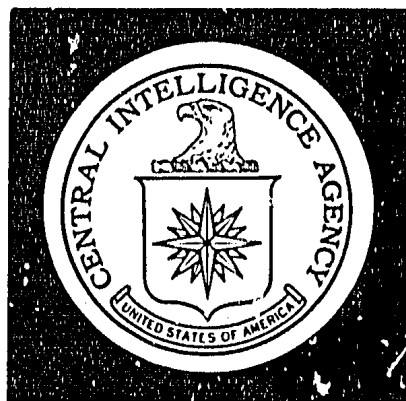
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

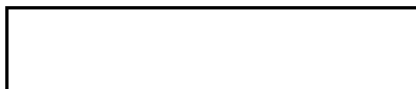
French Problems with German Eastern Policy

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
27 January 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

French Problems With German Eastern Policy

Summary

The Eastern policy of Chancellor Willy Brandt's government in Bonn has posed special problems for France. Traditionally concerned with restricting the role of Germany in Europe, the French see in Germany's present policy additional challenges to their claim to a leading role in East-West affairs, their position as a victor power in Germany, and their capacity to influence the development of relations between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe.

France's answer to this threat has been multifaceted and sometimes contradictory. Paris has both promoted detente and tried to stymie it; it has cooperated with Moscow in some areas, but in others has opposed the Soviets more firmly than any other Western European country. It has supported Brandt's Eastern policies even as it has shown resentment and distrust of them. All of these seemingly conflicting policies, however, appear to have a central goal--the maintenance of the French position in Europe, especially in relation to Germany.

Last summer the French apparently concluded that their tactics had been less than successful. They had not only failed to slow down Brandt's Ostpolitik, but found that their opposition to a conference on European security (CES), had left them isolated from the rest of Western Europe. During the latter part of the year, they tried to improve their position by

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accenting detente and cooperation with Moscow and Bonn. Although this shift in emphasis has been tentative and has not gone very far, it has led the French to adopt somewhat less negative stands on the Berlin talks and on a CES.

France's attempt to work more closely with the Soviets has apparently had little effect on German Eastern policy, particularly on matters on which the Soviets and West Germans agree. Nevertheless, Paris gives no sign that it is prepared to settle for a lesser alternative than its formal rights in Germany, and it will probably continue to look for an advantageous mixture of tactics to meet the challenge from Bonn.

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German Policies: A Threat to French Objectives

1. For more than a year the government of President Georges Pompidou has faced a government in West Germany that for the first time rivals France in ambition to influence East-West affairs. With skillfully conducted and imaginative policies, the government of Chancellor Willy Brandt has sought to realign relationships among the European countries so that they will coincide with the interests of Germany. In important ways--such as the common recognition of the need to ease relations between East and West in Europe--these interests are no different from those of the Pompidou government. The conflict arises from French resentment of Germany's assumption of an independent and even a determinant role in Europe.

2. Brandt's Eastern policy is primarily directed toward Germany itself. By relaxing tensions in central Europe, Brandt hopes that the two parts of Germany may again live together and perhaps eventually come together. Brandt is prepared not only to give up Germany's old suspicions of hostilities toward the Communist countries, but also to do what he can to overcome the East's deep-seated distrust of West Germany. This does not mean that West Germany will abandon its military and economic ties with the West, but it does indicate a willingness to relax the country's legal positions on the East German state and to accept the present situation in Europe as a factual point of departure.

3. Brandt first decided to work with Moscow rather than against it after the creation of the Berlin Wall, when he felt that the Western powers had failed to protect German interests in Berlin. As mayor of the city, he was able to work out an understanding with the Soviets under which the East Germans would issue holiday passes to the people of West Berlin who wished to visit the eastern part of the city. Seeking direct understandings with the Soviets continues to be a basic feature of Brandt's strategy.

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4. The Chancellor's policies raise problems for France on several scores. By the tactical concession of accepting Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe, Bonn undercuts the French effort to break down the dominance of the two super-powers and to encourage a free interplay of relations among all the countries of Europe. By dealing with the East on matters affecting the status of Germany and Berlin and by displaying a flexible attitude toward old juridical positions, Bonn could undermine the formal bases of the French role in central Europe. And by moving toward a larger German role, perhaps ultimately involving a confederated Germany, Brandt threatens a cardinal objective of French policy: the prevention of German predominance in Europe.

French Policy Objectives and Assets

5. The constants of French policy objectives, under Pompidou as under de Gaulle, begin with the assertion and maintenance of France's freedom of action. The French wish to maintain the independence and influence they deem necessary to maintain stability in Europe. They see the Warsaw Pact as a barrier to the development of better and more stable conditions, and they see the USSR as a dynamic and overwhelming force that has threatened peace in the past and may do so again. Loosening up the Warsaw Pact is one French aim. But France's special concern is its neighbor, Germany, which, it is convinced, must be kept in check.

6. France's political assets, although limited, are still strong enough to be effectively exploited by skillful diplomats. From the Second World War, the French acquired rights both in Germany as a whole and in Berlin; they therefore participate as equals in four-power negotiations and have a formal right of veto of the decisions that are made. West Germany in the meantime must operate under special restraints. The widespread distrust of the German that still exists more than 25 years after the end of the war inhibits the establishment of a new and more active political role, especially in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, since the Germans cannot acquire nuclear arms,

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the Bundeswehr lacks the military power and prestige accompanying the possession of atomic weapons. France's nuclear power, on the other hand, provides a potential base for a future European force and a substantive justification of the French claim to a role that is not totally dependent on the Americans and British. Above all, it is superior to anything the Germans can acquire. Finally, France's independence, willfully and often harshly flaunted by De Gaulle, has taught France's partners to recognize and even to fear the ability of the French to obstruct international agreements.

French Tactics

7. Since he came into office, Pompidou has abstained from the displays of unilateral intransigence that had characterized the regime of Charles de Gaulle. He apparently believes that France is not strong enough to stop Germany from seeking its own solutions to its own problems and that, therefore, he should avoid an obstructionist stance on German Eastern policy. Paris, although it cannot afford absolutely to exclude negative intervention because that would weaken its influence, is consequently unlikely to exercise a unilateral veto.

8. Instead the French have turned to multilateral diplomacy. By associating themselves with German Eastern policy and even contending that it is a logical development of De Gaulle's policies, the French hope to be able to retain some influence over the shape Ostpolitik will take. By withdrawing their veto of British entry to the Common Market, they hope to build up London as a counterweight to Bonn and to encourage Britain to stand with France. By improving relations with Washington, they hope to establish a joint understanding of the dangers of German Eastern policy and to persuade the US to assume the responsibility for any restriction or veto on Bonn. And by continuing to avoid actions that would unnecessarily offend Moscow, the French seek to set up a pattern of cooperation whenever their interests coincide with those of the USSR.

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9. The French policy is exceptionally complex, and its articulation and execution are not always well coordinated in Paris. In pursuing its objective of detente while maintaining control over the situation in Germany, France is led to apparent--and sometimes to real--contradictions, and the tactic of working both with and against the West Germans and the Soviets often obscures the real objectives. On current issues relating to Berlin and a CES the French have assumed postures that are both positive and negative, both promoting and holding back progress. They have usually participated constructively in the Berlin talks, but on certain occasions they have been obstructive. At least until last fall, they often emphasized the dangers of a CES, but they have also indicated interest in exploring the possibilities for a conference.

Recent Tactical Adjustments

10. Paris appears to have concluded toward the end of last summer that its tactics had not been effective. When the Soviet - West German treaty was signed in August, Pompidou was reported to be extremely unhappy that France had been unable to control, or even to slow, Brandt's Eastern policy. At about the same time there were signs of uneasiness in Paris over the growing support for a CES in Western Europe and the increasing isolation resulting from French and US opposition to such a conference. In short, the French had failed to control Brandt, had lost to the Germans their hold on the initiative in East-West affairs, and were finding it uncomfortable to be aligned with the Americans against the Germans.

11. France was also encouraged to adjust its tactics by developments in Bonn and Moscow. Until last fall, it appeared that Brandt's government could falter at any time, and it was possible that a new government would not continue his Eastern policy. But Brandt's hold on power now looks stronger, and the ideological opponents of his

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Ostpolitik have been forced into a secondary position within the opposition party. The French have therefore concluded that Germany Eastern policy is destined to continue.

12. The Soviets have given evidence that they will continue to work with Brandt in hopes of reaching further agreements. But they have also made clear that they remain interested in improving their working relationship with Paris. The French may have dismissed some of the Soviet gambits, seeing them as part of an effort to play one country against another in the West, especially in regard to the Berlin talks. But they must have concluded that some kind of opportunity for cooperation may now be at hand.

13. Pompidou's visit to Moscow in October offered a chance to signal an adjustment--though limited and tentative--of French policy. Not only was the institution of regular semiannual political consultations announced, but for the first time a positive French attitude toward a CES that was "properly prepared" was proclaimed. On 4 January of this year, in a further step in the same direction, Pompidou told the press that he hopes 1971 will see the beginning of active preparations for a conference. He said he recognized that Berlin remains the obstacle, but added, "I think that Berlin has been given too much importance." He suggested that the Berlin problem should not be exaggerated and called it "a problem of atmosphere rather than a question of principle."

14. Pompidou's conciliatory gestures toward Moscow indicate that the French do not wish to stress the obstacles to further agreements in European affairs. They were also intended to be helpful to Brandt, for even a modest agreement on Berlin would ease the way for Germany's ratification of its treaties with the USSR and Poland. The statements may therefore be read as a shift of French policy toward tactical cooperation with the USSR and West Germany. Moreover, the de-emphasis on Berlin leads away from

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concentration on talks that appear to be moving toward a phase in which allied--and French--influence may be reduced. In contrast, a CES might offer positive attractions as a forum where the French could pursue their objectives more effectively than the Germans.

15. There is other evidence that France's tactics are changing. During November and December, the French apparently sought a better understanding with Moscow on Berlin issues. In the Berlin talks their stance was less harsh than in the past. They failed to coordinate with the US and UK in carrying a Soviet protest to Brandt. More significantly, it appears likely that the French ambassador in Moscow tried to reach an understanding with the Soviets on one of the most delicate issues of the Berlin talks, the circumstances and conditions of German participation in the negotiations. In this effort, the French appear to have been seeking to trade their acceptance of very generalized four-power instructions to the Germans for Soviet agreement that any inter-German talks will be under the formal auspices of the four powers. We suspect that France was undertaking to compete with Bonn for an understanding with Moscow; if so, its efforts were doomed to fail. France's support of a CES and its agreement with the Soviets on some details of the Berlin situation do not compare in weight to the more general advantages Moscow may hope to draw from agreements with Bonn about Germany.

Outlook

16. The French have not yet succeeded in finding a tactic that can keep German Eastern policy within channels acceptable to Paris. Cooperation on a variety of fronts continues to be the preferred method. In recent months, the French seem to have recognized that obstruction of East-West negotiations is incompatible with gaining the advantages that might be gained through working with the USSR, as well as with other countries. They have been trying to emphasize accommodation and detente and to play down their former tactics of doubt and delay. But

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Pompidou's comments about Berlin do not imply that the French are no longer concerned over their legal rights and responsibilities in the city. They give no sign that they are prepared to reduce the present emphasis on these rights or that they see any substitute for them in the future. France's chances of success depend mainly on what happens in Bonn and Moscow, but they also depend on the skill with which French diplomats select their tactics and their timing. Unless the Soviets should unexpectedly see greater advantage in working with France than with Germany, however, it is hard to see how the present mix of French policies will be an effective counterforce to Ostpolitik.

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